What is Print Management?

Print Management, otherwise known as Managed Print Services (MPS), is the practice of trying to control costs and efficiencies in an uncontrolled and expensive category of IT. Printing is often referred to as the last bastion of cost savings and yet, for years, no one seemed to focus their efforts on trying to manage it. As agencies and institutions are forced to cut costs and show the return on investment (ROI), print management is finally becoming a priority, yet most people have no idea how to get started. To further compound the issue, printing costs are usually shared across many departments with IT responsible for the network operations, facilities responsible for the consumables, a higher entity responsible for the power, and no one having the overall responsibility to get the situation under control. Unless you're a CEO or head of a Government Agency, your department rarely shoulders the burden for all costs, plus there

are numerous "soft costs" like training and driver maintenance that are hard to quantify. When agencies try to implement print management, they usually turn to the large print/copier manufacturers who start by undertaking workshops, followed by assessments, leading to Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) studies that show huge cost savings yet require a significant investment up front. Furthermore, the solutions proposed vary widely amongst manufacturers with some suggesting a centralized approach, some suggesting a distributed approach, some based on print devices, and others based on copiers or multi-function devices (MFDs). Lastly, the end result is usually a per-page-charge, which is an aggregate charge including all services and products with no breakdown of the individual costs. As a result, many agencies end up confused and frustrated and choose to do nothing.

The High Costs of Printing

To understand our approach, let's start by looking at the primary costs associated with printing:

- ⊕ **Hardware:** This category includes more than just stand-alone printers. To begin with, printers come in many flavors including mono, color, single function, multifunction, laser based, ink based, large format, stand alone, and networked. Add to that digital senders, fax machines, scanners, and copiers and then multiply by the number of manufacturers, such as HP, Canon, Ricoh, Xerox, Lexmark, etc., and you start to understand how quickly your hardware can become unmanageable and costly. In addition, these devices are rarely utilized within their recommended

usage guidelines, which means you're paying for capacity you don't use in addition to maintenance plans, power, cooling, and other costly expenses. To compound the situation, many users claim they have to have their own printing device for security reasons. These devices are typically extremely underutilized from an output perspective yet require toner/ink, paper, power, and maintenance equivalent to every other device. They are also rarely networked, which further adds to their lack of utilization and means there is no central management of the devices.

- ⊕ **Supplies:** This is the big cost driver. Take all the hardware devices identified above and add expensive

ink and toner cartridges, paper, fusers, and rollers, and now the cost of the device itself seems inexpensive in comparison. Walk into any typical office environment and you will undoubtedly find shelves or even closets full of printing supplies, many for devices that aren't in service anymore and represent thousands of dollars' worth of inventory.

⊕ **Service:** Unfortunately, moving parts tend to fail, and printers and other input/output devices have lots of moving parts. Everyone has experienced the frustration with the copier and print devices not working. To combat downtime, many agencies have expensive 4-hour return-to-service plans that further add to the high price of maintaining a functioning print environment.

⊕ **Security:** Today's printers have all the features of computers, including processors, hard drives, memory, network cards, etc., which means they are as vulnerable to attack as any other device on your network. In addition, printed information left in the output tray of a print device can be as harmful to an agency as any other breach of security and cost you millions if not handled properly.

⊕ Lastly are all the "soft costs" such as driver maintenance, training, help desk support, and power/cooling. While these are real costs, they are the type of items that, when included in a TCO analysis, tend to make the reader skeptical that they will ever really see a return on their investment and, hence, add to their reluctance to initiate the process.

While AlphaSix's print management solution will provide significant cost savings in all areas, the primary savings result in the areas of hardware, supplies/consumables, and service. As a bonus, AlphaSix's solution provides enhanced security through secure pull printing, which ensures documents end up where they belong and not in the wrong people's hands.

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The Solution

AlphaSix has developed an easy-to-implement, cost-effective method for managing your print environment that requires a relatively small upfront investment with a very short ROI. Furthermore, our solution is scalable so you start small and add additional features until all aspects of your print environment are fully optimized and managed.

The entire process can be broken into a handful of steps as follows:

⊕ Step 1 – Estimate the current environment to develop a rough ROI. We have an automated process that starts delivering cost savings while it is capturing your usage habits.

⊕ Step 2 – Based on actual usage reports, right-size and optimize the printer fleet and service levels.

⊕ Step 3 – Initiate just-in-time supplies replenishment. Our process will eliminate the closets full of supplies we see in most agencies while ensuring you have access to the supplies you need, when you need them.

⊕ Step 4 – Implement secure pull printing. Our solution will allow you to securely retrieve your output at any device on the network while also helping to save the environment by eliminating uncollected print jobs.

By following the AlphaSix roadmap, your agency can literally save millions of dollars per year while being in complete control of your printing environment. Even if you only implemented Step 1, you would have a deeper understanding of what was being printed, when, by whom, and save yourself millions in the process. Steps 2 through 4 further reduce your costs and introduce secure printing and supplies management while also reducing the amount you spend on service annually. Our solution is currently deployed at numerous customers who will attest to the simplicity and effectiveness they have achieved in understanding and managing their print environments.

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Conclusion

Based on years of experience in right-sizing and managing customer's print environments, AlphaSix has compiled the tools and processes to implement a solution that provides a large return on your investment in a very short period of time. Utilizing our proven process, AlphaSix can quickly assess your needs based on your current printing infrastructure and habits. We then recommend what devices should be placed where to help ensure the optimal usage. We also suggest payment plans that allow you to pay for what you need when you need it and avoid stockpiling printing supplies. Lastly, we implement Toner Savings and Secure Release Here products which help further drive down costs and provide you with a flexible, secure, pull printing environment.

As you can see, print management does not have to be a massive undertaking filled with fear, uncertainty, and doubt. The AlphaSix print management framework allows you to build an a la carte solution inexpensively while demonstrating ROI based on your initial assumptions. There's no vendor charging you all encompassing monthly fees that leave you confused and guessing as to what you're paying for. If you've recognized that your print costs are out of control, and you want to increase efficiency and transparency, contact AlphaSix to start the process of truly managing and understanding your print environment.

Print Management offers most organizations an opportunity to not only save money, but also streamline resources and become more environmentally friendly. To find out more about AlphaSix's work in this area, please contact us at info@alphasixcorp.com.

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